

HR Weekly Podcast

10/12/07

Today is October 12, 2007, and welcome to the HR Weekly Podcast from the State Office of Human Resources. This week's topic concerns the importance of knowledge transfer as a workforce planning tool.

Thomas Stewart of Business 2.0 Magazine says: "Knowledge is the most important raw material of government; working with knowledge is its most important process; and knowledge is what citizens expect government to provide." With nearly 25% of the State's workforce eligible to retire in the next five years, a large amount of knowledge could be leaving the workplace. The challenge for agencies is determining a way to capture and replace the knowledge that is exiting.

Knowledge transfer is defined as the process of transferring knowledge, skills, ideas, or experience from a knowledgeable employee to another employee or unit. Knowledge transfer is a critical tool in workforce planning because agencies can capture critical knowledge and information from experienced employees that may be retiring or leaving the agency for various reasons. Some of the other reasons that knowledge transfer is critical to your agency besides the number of employees eligible to retire are:

- Middle management ranks are thin because of budget reductions, reorganizations, and early retirement incentives.
- Recruiting new talent is always a difficult process.
- The new talent coming does not have the experience to handle situations that may not occur in everyday "normal" situations

Knowledge can exist in the workplace in two forms: explicit or tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is *information* that is organized in a particular way for future retrieval; for example, documents, databases, spreadsheets, procedures manuals, or checklists. This knowledge is easy to teach and retrieve for a newcomer. Tacit knowledge is *knowledge* that people carry in their heads. It is difficult to access and most people are not even aware of what they possess or how it is of value to others. Tacit knowledge provides context for ideas, experiences, people, and places and is not easily captured.

Here are a few steps that you can follow for your agency to get started with knowledge transfer.

- Identify areas where significant loss of knowledge and skills will be occurring in the near future.
- Identify "high value" knowledge and skills-core business processes or programs most vulnerable to turnover.
- Based on those criteria, select a function in your organization that would benefit from knowledge transfer.
- Identify a knowledge transfer strategy. Some of the more frequently used knowledge transfer strategies are:
 - Job Shadowing
 - Best Practice Meetings
 - Critical Incident Interviews or Questionnaires
 - Job Aids
 - Job Rotation
 - Lessons Learned Debriefings
 - Mentoring, and
 - Training.

For a complete list of knowledge transfer strategies or to learn more about knowledge transfer please check out OHR's workforce planning website. An effective knowledge transfer plan can prevent your agency from losing critical knowledge which is very difficult and, in some cases, impossible to replace. If you have any questions or need assistance in workforce planning or knowledge transfer, please contact your HR Consultant at 737-0900.

Thank you.